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February 22, 2005

The Honorable Michael Castle
The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Castle and DeGette:

The Parkinson's Action Network (PAN) strongly supports your legislation, HR 810, The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, expanding federal support for human stem cell research. Founded in 1991, PAN is the unified education and advocacy voice of the Parkinson's community—more than one million Americans and their families. Through education and interaction with the Parkinson's community, scientists, lawmakers, opinion leaders, and the public, PAN leads the fight to ease the burden and find a cure for this devastating disease. PAN increases awareness about Parkinson's disease and seeks federal support for Parkinson's research. PAN is also a founding Member organization of the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research.

More than three years have passed since President Bush articulated the current federal policy in this area in a nationally televised statement in August 2001. Since then, we have learned much more about the potential of research on human stem cells to open vistas of scientific research for future therapies and cures that could save millions of lives at risk today from diseases and medical conditions including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, juvenile diabetes, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injuries. PAN is working to ensure that this significant avenue of medical research will become available – and stay available – for scientists throughout the United States.

Your legislation would allow broader federal funding for stem cell research, while ensuring no federal funding shall be used to derive stem cells or destroy embryos. The bill further emphasizes that the cell lines eligible for federal funds are derived from excess fertilized eggs donated by in vitro fertilization clinics with consent from the individuals for whom they were created, and that the eggs were created for fertility purposes and would otherwise be discarded. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act also would direct the National Institutes of Health to develop appropriate ethical guidelines for future derivation of human stem cell lines.

The Parkinson's Action Network applauds your legislation and looks forward to working with you to keep the door to scientific discovery open. We thank you for your dedicated efforts to preserve the promise of medical research for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy L. Comstock".

Amy L. Comstock
Executive Director